

TOWN OF ROWE *CLIMATE-RESILIENT* OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN (OSRP)



Mount Adams
Stephen St. Davis

Public Forum

Wednesday, November 1, 2023

Public Forum Agenda

- Welcome
- Opening Presentation (6:05 – 6:40)
 - What is an OSRP?
 - Key features of the plan
 - Accomplishments in last decade
 - Community, natural, recreational resources and needs
 - 7-Year Action Plan
 - Next steps
- Public Comment period (6:40 – 7:20)
 - Questions
 - Discussion

[Link to plan: https://rowe-ma.gov/files/A_Climate_Resilient_Open_Space_and_Recreation_Plan_for_Rowe_10-2-23.pdf](https://rowe-ma.gov/files/A_Climate_Resilient_Open_Space_and_Recreation_Plan_for_Rowe_10-2-23.pdf)

Open Space & Recreation Plan Purpose

- ❑ Inventories natural, recreational and cultural resources in Rowe
- ❑ Identifies environmental/ecological, open space, and recreation needs
- ❑ Establishes Goals, Objectives, and Actions to meet these needs
- ❑ Enables the Town of Rowe to apply for state grants for land conservation and recreation facility improvements



Winter Road
Ben Kimball

Contents of the OSRP



1. Plan Summary
2. Introduction
3. Community Setting
4. Environmental Inventory & Analysis
5. Inventory of Lands of Conservation & Recreation Interest
6. Community Goals
7. Analysis of Needs
8. Goals & Objectives
9. Seven-Year Action Plan
10. Public Comments

Key features of a **Climate-Resilient** plan

- ❑ Local climate change data and impacts at watershed scale
- ❑ Updated ecological data and land conservation resources
- ❑ Consideration of climate change vulnerabilities in all chapters
- ❑ Relevant recent research and planning work:
 - ❑ 2016 Hazard Mitigation Plan
 - ❑ 2021 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Plan
 - ❑ 2022 Climate-Smart Stewardship Plan for Pelham Lake Park



Cows
Laurie Pike

Planning Process

- ❑ The **Open Space Committee** took the lead on the current update
- ❑ **12 open public meetings** since March 2022
- ❑ **Public survey** in September 2022 (**61 responses!**)
- ❑ **Public forum** – TODAY – November 1, 2023
- ❑ **Comment period** – now thru Friday December 1st
- ❑ **Submission** to the Department of Conservation Services - January

Accomplishments Since 2010

- Conservation Projects
 - Nan Williams Conservation Area
 - Shantigar/Warner Hill protection and public trail
- Pelham Lake Park
 - Pelham Lake survey of lake health
 - 2020 Forest Stewardship Plan and 2022 Climate-Resilient Forest Stewardship Plan
 - 13 trail kiosks
 - Design of an Old Growth interpretive trail
 - Assessment of white pines at Percy Brown Picnic Area, removal of sick trees
 - Climate resilience projects: hemlock wooly adelgid monitoring, ash tree inoculation, red oak enrichment plantings, white oak assisted-migration plantings.
 - Assessment of park's trail system
 - Educational and informational materials for the kiosks
 - New trail blazes
 - New boardwalk
 - Refurbished tennis and pickleball courts
 - Recreation and education programs
- Right to Farm bylaw adopted
- Rowe Hazard Mit. Plan, MVP Plan, Deerfield River Study



Community Findings

- ❑ Population climbing slowly since the 1950s (low 200s to low 400s)
- ❑ Population projections show possible population decline, some aging
- ❑ 3 building permits for new homes issued 2010 – 2022
- ❑ Mapped as Environmental Justice Area because grouped with Charlemont and Monroe, but more affluent than county as a whole



Walter the Beaver
Rick Williams

- Temperature changes:
 - ▣ More seasonal variability
 - ▣ Higher average temps
 - ▣ Longer heat waves
 - ▣ Shorter winters with less snow
- Precipitation changes:
 - ▣ Rain less reliable
 - ▣ More intense rains
 - ▣ Increased frequency of extreme weather events

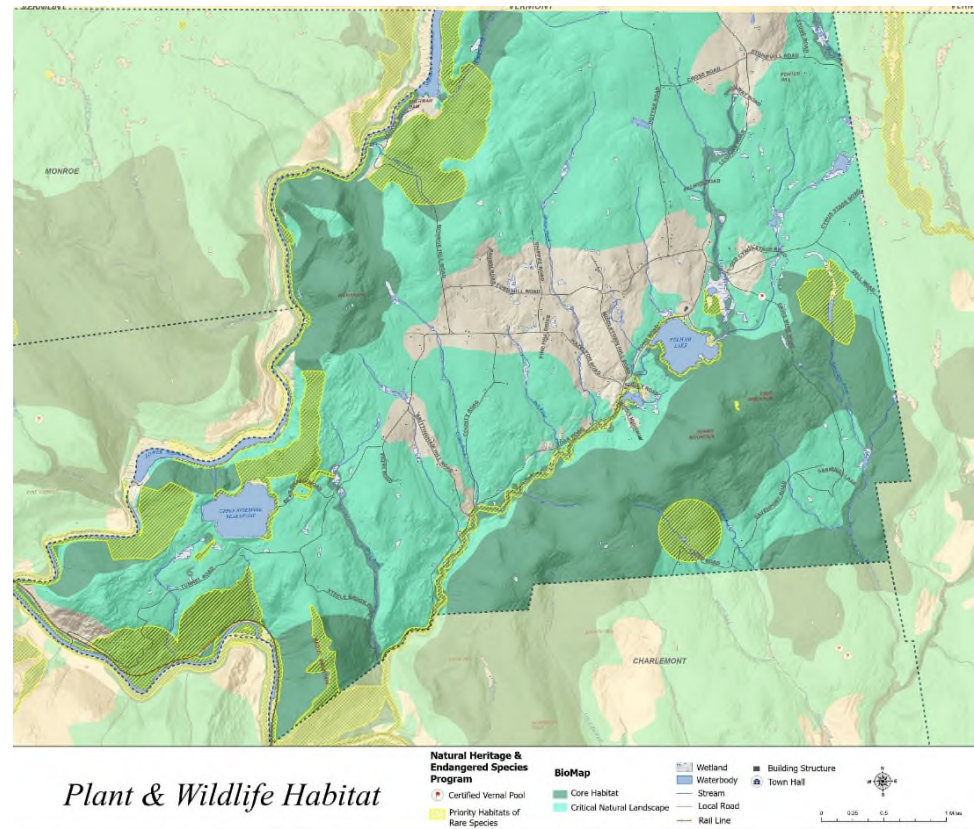


Environmental Vulnerabilities Identified in the Rowe Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan (2021)

- The vulnerability of gravel roads and road infrastructure to extreme weather events
- The increasing and the lack of wildfire fighting infrastructure
- The rise of vector-borne diseases
- The increasing presence of invasive species
- The vulnerability of northern hardwood and conifer forests to changing climate
- The threat of wildfire

Environmental Findings

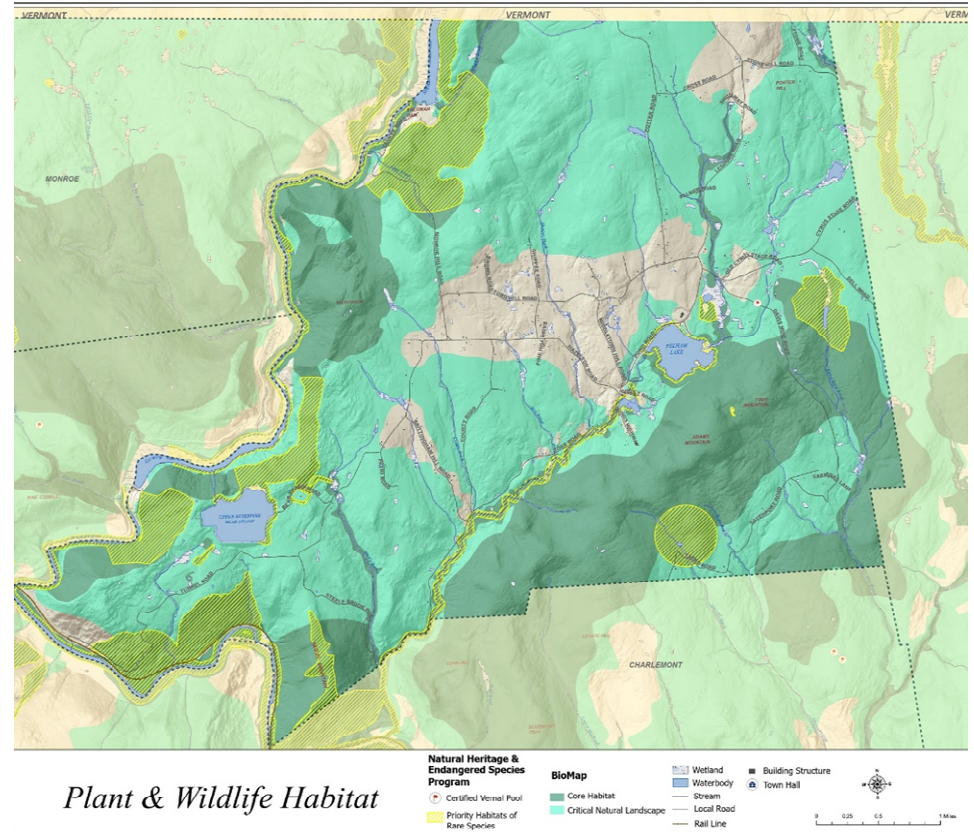
- BioMap2 Core Habitat:
 - Mt. Todd – Mt. Adams Range
 - Southeast corner
 - Negus Mountain
 - Hillsides and ridgetops along Deerfield River
- Priority Habitat:
 - Water
 - Ridgetops
 - Mine shafts
- Large blocks of contiguous forest
 - Mt. Todd – Mt. Adams Range
 - Western Rowe
 - Tuttle Brook area



- Other habitat
 - Powerlines
 - Field and meadow
 - Streams, ponds, wetlands

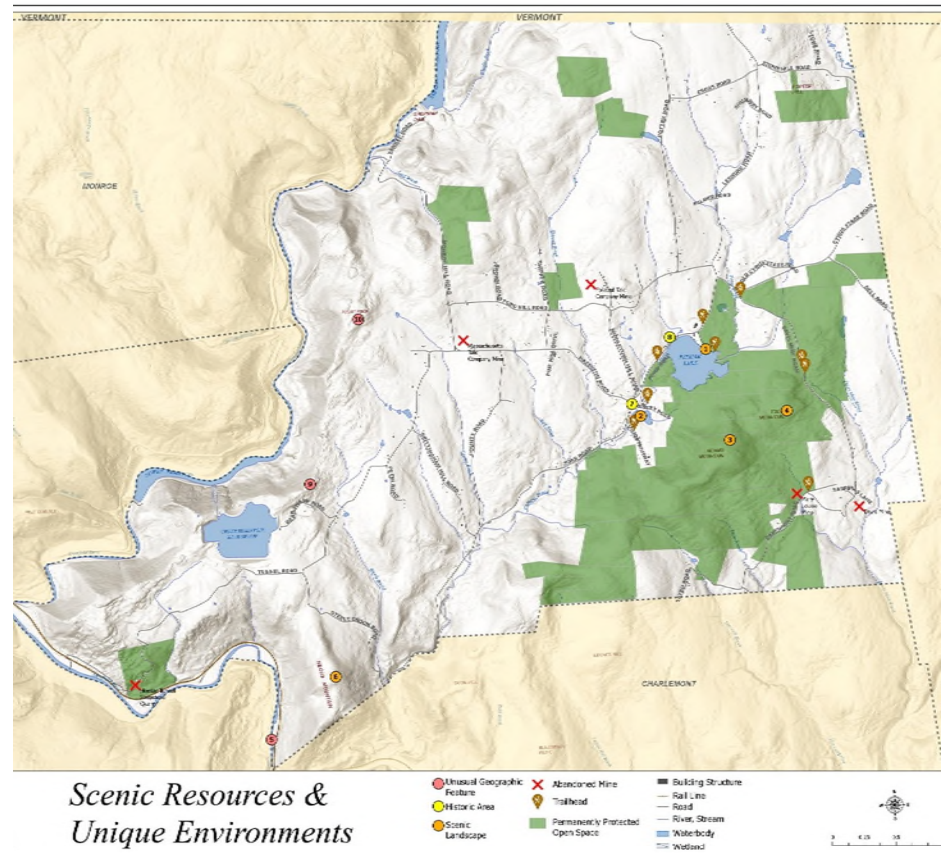
Environmental Findings

- Water
 - Flood management at Pelham Lake Park and town center
 - Deerfield spawning habitat
 - Vernal pools
 - Groundwater & wells
- Pelham Lake Park forest
 - Diverse species composition but homogenous age class
 - Hemlock and ash will likely fair poorly
 - Invasives threat



Scenic and Historic Resources

- Scenic areas:
 - Mountain views
 - Ponds and wetlands
- Historic areas:
 - Town Center
 - Fort Pelham
- Unique features
 - Pulpit Rock
 - Glacial Erratics
 - Zoar Gap
 - Historic mines



Open Space Findings

Protected lands as a percentage of town area

19% permanent

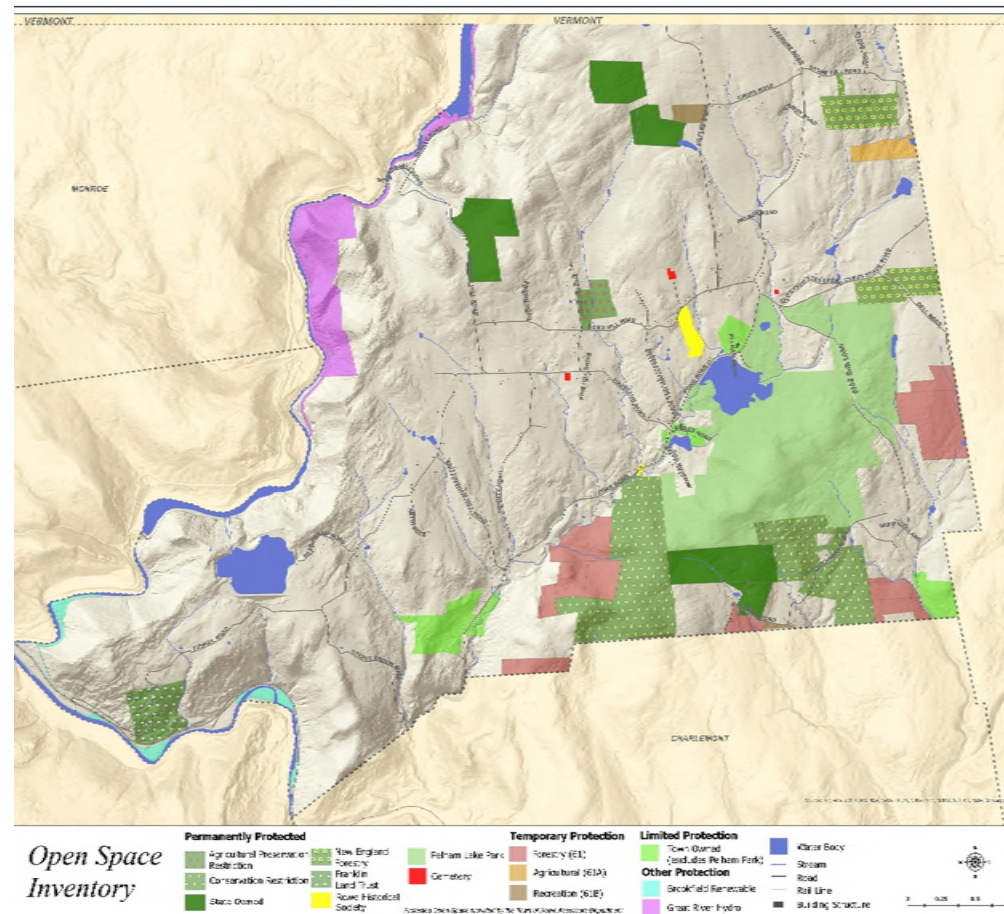
1% limited

+ 3% temporary

23% protected in some form

■ Open Space Protect Trends:

- Recent protection projects: southwest corner and Nan Williams parcel
- Less permanently protected land than other towns in county
- Some unprotected wetlands
- Large Bear Swamp parcel recently removed from protection
- Need a system to protect high-value parcels when opportunities arise

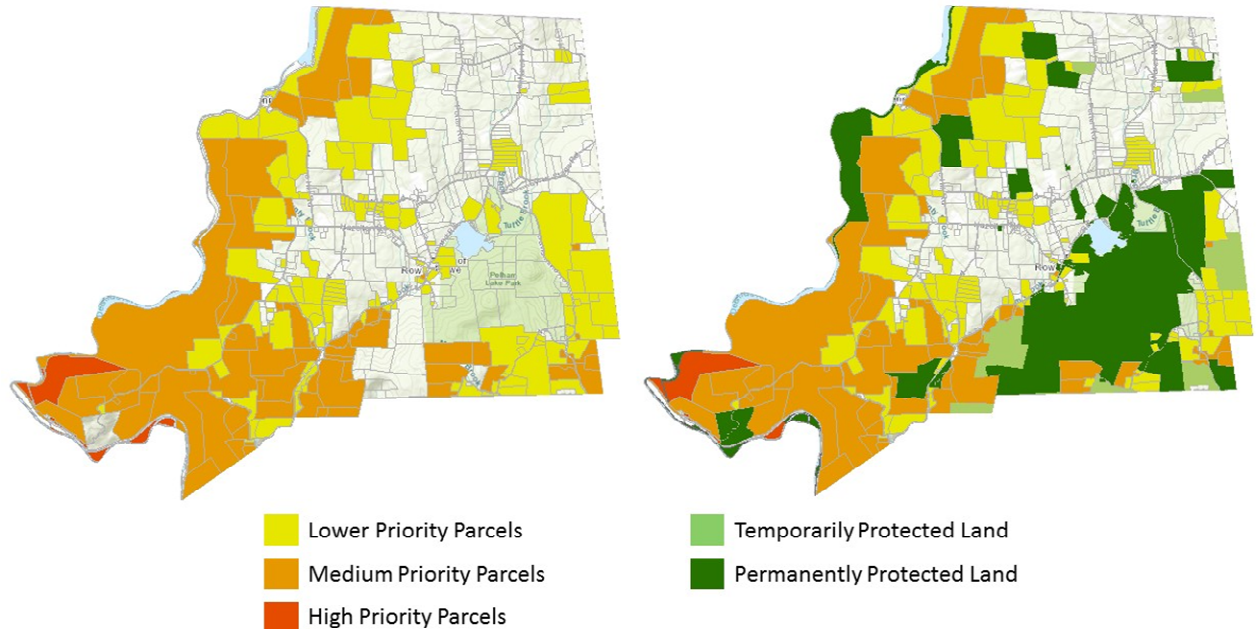


Open Space Findings

- Protection focus areas:
 - Large blocks of contiguous forest
 - BioMap Core habitat
 - Linkages between habitat
 - Riparian corridors
 - Land use policies that reduce fragmentation

One way of assessing areas for conservation:

MAPPR Resilience Model & protected land in Rowe
(MassAudubon and Rowe Town Assessor)

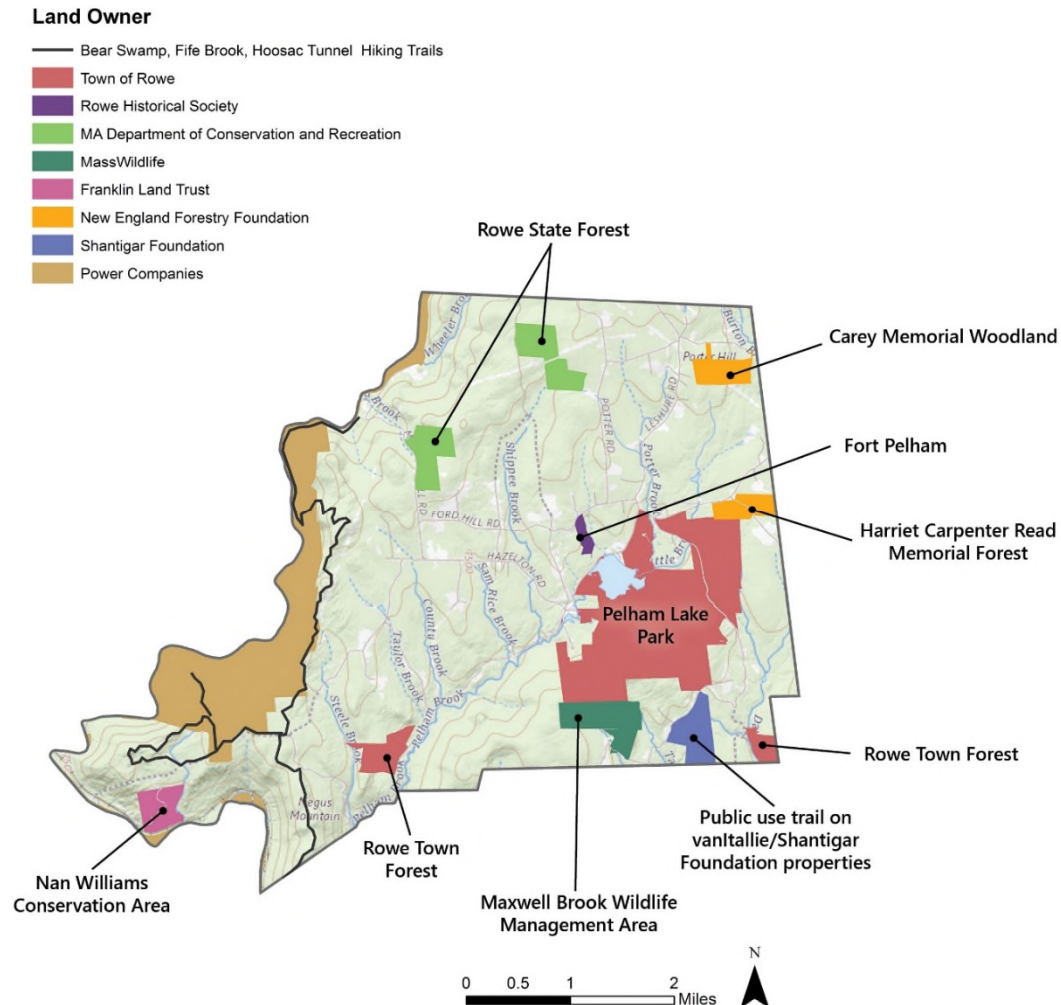


Open Space & Recreation Resources

- ADA Assessment
- Park staff & volunteer committees

Recreation facilities

- Pelham Lake Park
 - 20 miles of trails
 - Playground
 - Picnic pavilion
 - Beach
 - Public boats
 - Tennis/pickleball courts
 - Riding ring
 - Fishing/hunting
- Non-Pelham Lake Park
 - Skate park
 - School playground, court, fields
 - Pocket parks and benches



Survey Results

How often do you use the following open space and recreation resources in town?

Top 5 places people go OFTEN

- 1) PLP Trails
- 2) PLP Beach
- 3) Private trails
- 4) Rowe State Forest
- 5) Rowe Town Forest

Top 5 places people NEVER go

- 1) Riding ring
- 2) Skate Park
- 3) School playground
- 4) Fort Pelham
- 5) Library garden

Top 5 places people DON'T KNOW ABOUT

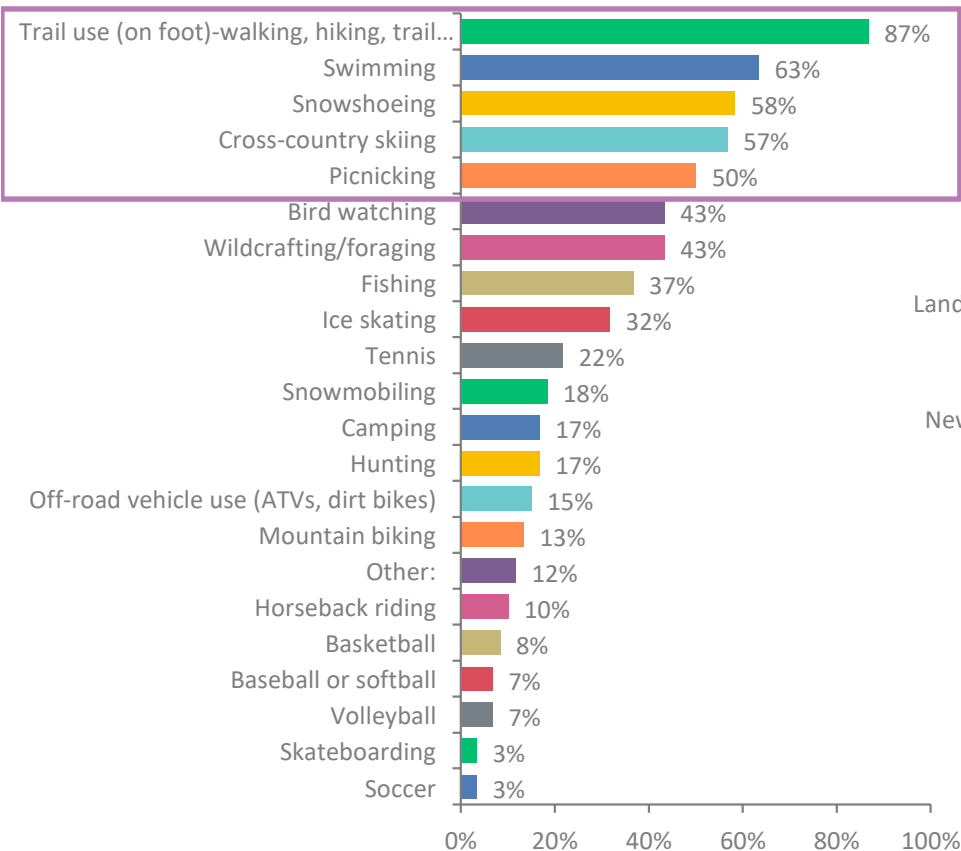
- 1) Carrie Memorial Woodland
- 2) Harriet Carpenter Read Memorial Forest
- 3) Trail at Shantigar/van Itallie
- 4) Nan Williams Conservation Area
- 5) Maxwell Brook WMA

What improvements, if any, do you feel are needed to increase access for any of the following activities in Rowe? **(Open ended)**

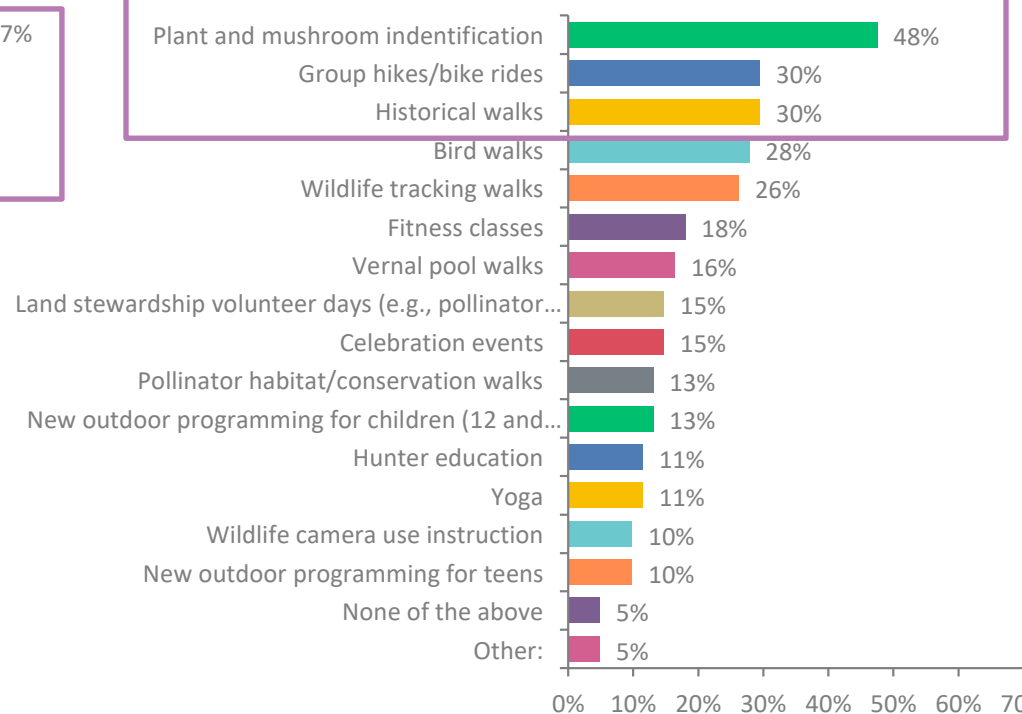
- Better marked and signed trails
- Handicap trails and generally more accessible trails
- Better trail maps and publicity of trail locations
- Better trail maintenance

Survey Results

Which of the following recreational activities do you and your family want to do more of in Rowe?

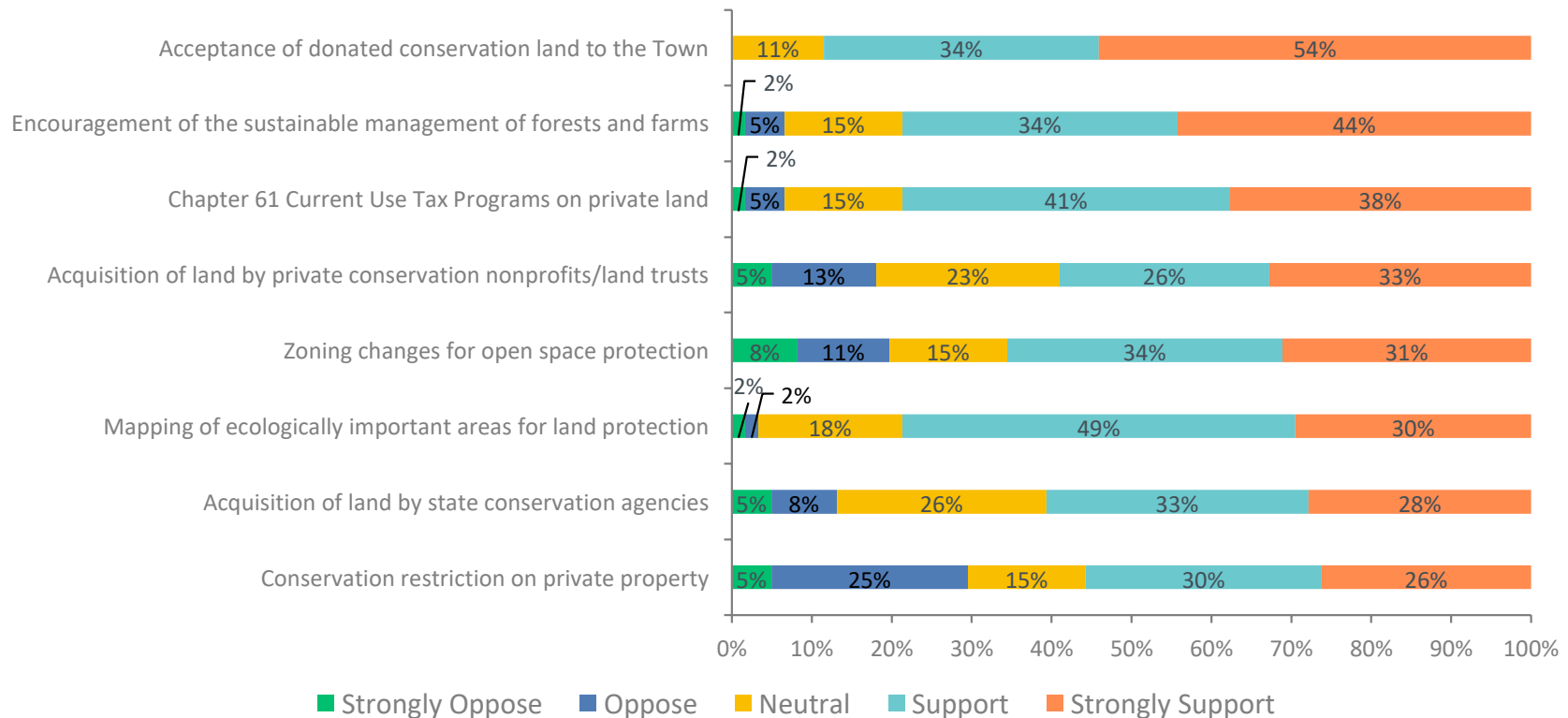


Which of the following outdoor activities would you or your household participate in?



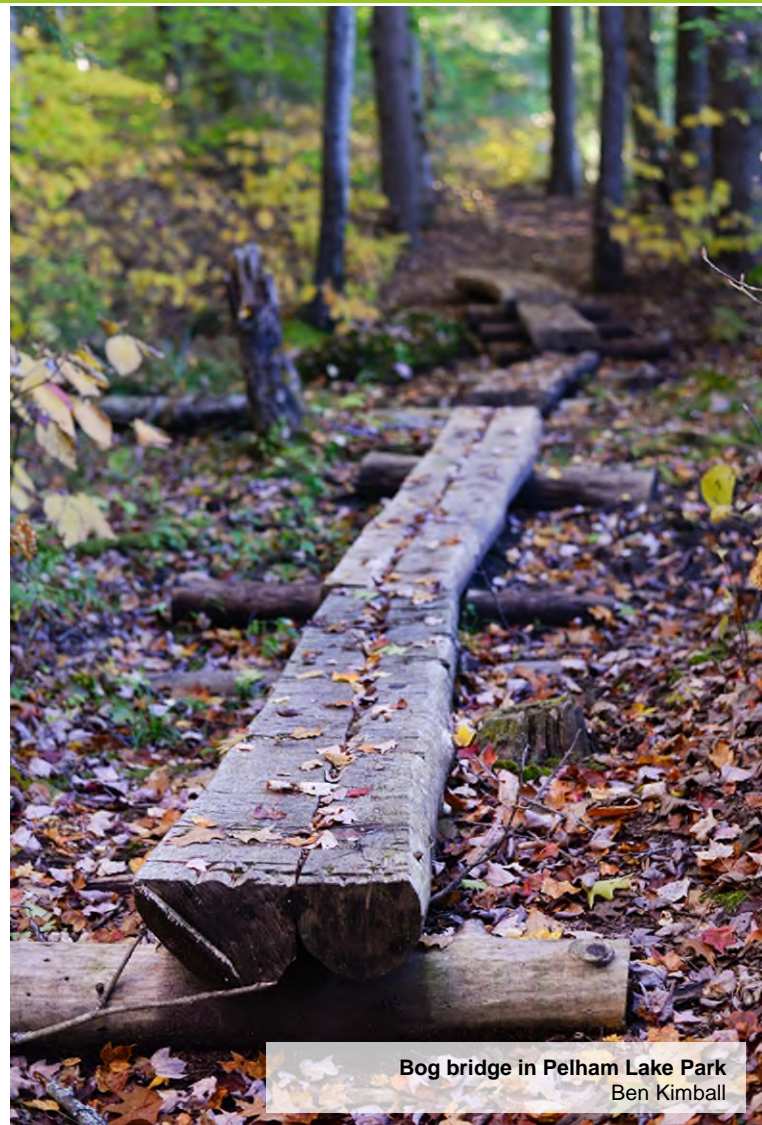
Survey Results

What is your level of support for each of the following actions designed to protect/conservate open spaces and natural resources?



Recreation & Community Needs

- Trails:
 - Improve existing hiking trails
 - Manage mountain/woods biking trails
 - Expand hiking trail options
 - Accessible boardwalks and trail for bird and wildlife viewing
- Other Recreation
 - Boating
 - Cycling
 - Fishing & Hunting
 - Picnicking & Outdoor Gathering
 - Programming
- Access
- Accessibility
- Rural, small-town character



Bog bridge in Pelham Lake Park
Ben Kimball

Open Space/Natural Resource Needs

- Forest climate resilience
 - Keep large blocks of forest unfragmented
 - Manage forests for age diversity
 - Support the Climate-Smart Forest Stewardship Plan
- Habitat
 - Use ecological analysis tools to prioritize areas for protection
 - Support Deerfield River habitat restoration
 - Expand pollinator habitat
 - Reduce invasive species
- Water
 - Protect water resources
 - Expand groundwater analysis and protection, monitor supply
 - Protect wetlands and improve riparian habitat
 - Improve flood resilience of roads, buildings, homes



Brown Trout
USFWS

- Consider for protection
 - Formerly Conserved Bear Swamp parcels
 - Fort Pelham
 - Mount Todd – Mount Adams range
 - Negus Mountain
 - Yankee Atomic Lands

Plan Goals

CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Open Space

PROTECT ECOSYSTEM INTEGRITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Recreation

ENHANCE RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

Management

CREATE THE ORGANIZATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL
FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING THE GOALS FO THE OSRP

See Table 9-1, Section 9: Seven-Year Action Plan

Seven-Year Action Plan

<p>A.1 Prioritize the protection of lands that contain and support the function of valuable and sensitive ecological systems, ecosystems services, recreation, and climate resilience. x</p>	<p>Establish procedures for expeditiously exercising the Town's Right of First Refusal with respect to Chapter 61 parcels, including the assignment of this right to a land trust, non-profit conservation organization, or state conservation organization. Steps to reaching this goal include: ¶</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. → Educate Rowe's Select Board, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Board of Assessors, and other relevant Boards and Committees on the Right of First Refusal process. ¶ 2. → Create a working group to identify criteria for land protection and incorporate the procedure into the 2024 Open Space and Recreation Plan. ¶ 3. → Identify priority areas for protection using newly developed criteria. ¶ 4. → Using the established criteria, work with Town Boards to create a step-by-step procedure for evaluating the Town's interest in parcels coming out of Chapter 61 in a timely manner. x
	<p>Develop a strategy for expanding Pelham Lake Park through Town acquisition of land from willing landowners, wherein the Town prioritizes which parcels to acquire using similar criteria as would be established for the Chapter 61 Right of First Refusal process (see above action). x</p>
	<p>Encourage Brookfield Renewables to permanently protect acreage that recently came out of protection. Priority could go to areas with public trails and areas of high ecological value. x</p>
	<p>Support efforts by the Town, utility companies, and regional land conservation partners to protect unprotected lands of conservation interest identified in Section 5. x</p>



Seven-Year Action Plan

<p>A.2 Manage open space and ecosystems for their many benefits, including biodiversity, habitat, stormwater management, climate resilience, and carbon sequestration.¶</p>	<p>Follow the recommendations of the Climate-Smart Stewardship Plan for PLP for forest enhancement, diversification of forest composition, monitoring of vulnerable native species, native plant regeneration and treatment, monitoring and control invasive species, etc.¶</p>
	<p>Improve management of Town-owned open space and recreation parcels outside of Pelham Lake Park.¶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • → Clarify who is responsible for the management of Town Forest parcels and develop management goals for them.¶ • → Where applicable, apply the same principles for forest management of recommended for Pelham Lake Park on other municipally-owned land such as the Town forests.¶ • → Hire a consultant to develop an invasive species management plan for Town-owned properties.¶
	<p>Support Trout Unlimited and other partners in advocating for minimum flow levels in the Deerfield River and other practices encourage the success and health of native trout fisheries.¶</p>
	<p>Explore the feasibility of the participation in a carbon offset program with the use of the PLP forest ecosystem as a carbon sink. If feasible gather support for implementation.¶</p>



Seven-Year Action Plan

<p><u>A.3</u>: Protect high-quality waters and the availability and quality of drinking water resources by managing stormwater and by protecting or preserving wetlands, cold-water fisheries, floodplains, the river corridor, and riparian buffers. x</p>	<p>Develop a unified approach to road maintenance that reduces the volume and impact of surface water runoff to transportation infrastructure. Incorporate stormwater BMPs for rural dirt roads into public roadway projects following the forthcoming (2024) Dirt Roads Stormwater Toolkit best practices manual created by the FRCOG. x</p>
	<p>Adopt a stormwater bylaw and/or incorporate green performance standards into site plan review. x</p>
	<p>Hire an engineering consultant to conduct a fluvial geomorphic study of the Pelham Brook watershed to better understand issues of erosion and sedimentation in the lake and stream system and potential risks to road and building infrastructure. Include in this study an evaluation of the conditions at the uncapped Town landfill on the edge of Taylor and Pelham Brooks and provide recommendations to mitigate erosion issues that could lead to contamination of the nearby waterways. x</p>
	<p>As an alert system to a groundwater issue, develop a program to track the incidence of wells going dry and needing to be re-drilled. x</p>
	<p>Revisit the recommendations of the 2001 Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP) Report for Rowe Elementary School and MassDEP's Wellhead Protection Tips for Small Public Water Systems. Consider developing a local wellhead protection plan or an aquifer protection district and bylaws for compliance with 310 CMR 22.000 to include IWPA's and Zone I protection areas for public wells in town. Consider hiring an engineer to map the aquifer, for future use as a Zone II protection area. x</p>



Seven-Year Action Plan

<p>A.4-Minimize flood damage by managing stormwater and by protecting or preserving wetlands, cold water fisheries, floodplains, the river corridor, and riparian buffers. ¶</p>	<p>Hire a consultant to complete an assessment of all culverts and drainage systems in Town. The assessment should include an evaluation of the physical state of the culverts and GIS data of where culverts are located. Prioritize repairs and replacements based on the results of the inventory. The FRCOG has resources to help Towns calculate climate resilient replacement sizes for culverts that can handle future storm events. ¶</p>	
	<p>Hire a consultant to identify necessary flood-proofing measures for Rowe's municipal buildings located around waterbodies that are vulnerable to flooding. ¶</p>	
	<p>Hire a registered professional engineer to: ¶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •→ Complete a detailed hydraulic and hydrologic (H&H) study that identifies an appropriate method to improve the Pelham Lake dam's hydraulic capacity. ¶ •→ Investigate and identify measures to improve the hydraulic capacity of the Mill Pond Dam to safely pass the spillway design flood with one foot of freeboard, as suggested in the most recent dam inspection. ¶ 	
	<p>Consider improving flood resilience in town by: ¶</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.→ Applying to become a member of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP); ¶ 2.→ Adopting a floodplain district and zoning bylaw that meets NFIP criteria or a river corridor zoning bylaw, whichever strategy will best protect the health of the river and nearby public and private infrastructure based on the analysis provided by the H&H study; and ¶ 3.→ Revising the Zoning Bylaws to include flood prevention and mitigation in the Special Permit Guidelines, and Site Plan Review, and subdivision regulations. ¶ 	
<p>A.5-Use land use regulations to increase protection of valued open space and habitat, and to support climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. ¶</p>	<p>Consider revising zoning bylaws to allow new development to be more clustered together help prevent the fragmentation of undeveloped open space by new development (e.g. reduce minimum lot size, cluster zoning, bylaw, or senior/congregate housing bylaw). ¶</p>	
	<p>Update solar bylaws and the permit review process to increase environmental safeguards, including more protection for wildlife habitat, provisions for pollinators, increased stormwater management, restoration of agricultural land, etc., and to address battery storage. ¶</p>	



Seven-Year Action Plan

B.1 Steward Pelham Lake Park to keep it functioning as a beloved community resource.¶	Build and maintain a trail network that is less vulnerable to extreme and irregular precipitation events using strategies such as re-routing trails to better fit with topography and responsible trail layout principles, improving drainage where trails overlap with water features, building trail infrastructure such as bridges or boardwalks to reduce areas of erosion, and increasing trail monitoring during and after extreme weather.¶
	Identify whether there is a need for more Carry-In—Carry-Out signage.¶
	Consider installing a 1,500-foot lollipop boardwalk into beaver meadow complex and install bird blinds and a viewing tower.¶



B.2 Expand the recreation options across town.¶	Reach out to owners of privately owned, publicly accessible land, such as properties owned by New England Forestry Foundation or the hydroelectric utility companies, to better understand goals of property to clarify preferred use and see if there is potential to expand use. Where trails exist, seek to understand who should be responsible for trail maintenance and improving signage.¶
	Support creation or expansion of long-distance trails, such the potential Regional Through Trail currently being mapped that would connect Catamount State Forest and Mohawk Trail State Forest through Rowe.☐
	Put together a committee to explore options for improving indoor community spaces.¶



Seven-Year Action Plan

<p><u>B.3</u> Protect and improve the accessibility of recreational and cultural opportunities in Rowe for all ages and abilities. ¶</p>	Using the Rowe ADA Self-Assessment as a guide, install ADA-accessible parking and pathways to recreation facilities where feasible and where doing so does not dramatically alter the desired character of the site. As picnic tables are replaced, make sure they are accessible. ¶
	Continue to improve trails for low-mobility users, with the goal of ultimately establishing at least one ADA-accessible trail. Consider the Beach Trail, Babbling Brook Trail, or the lollipop boardwalk in the beaver meadow. ¶
	Provide community boats at Pelham Lake Park that cater to a range of abilities, such as having a paddle boat for people who have difficulty using their arms for propulsion. ¶
	Create an accessible fishing dock. ¶
	Continue to host programs that are popular with children and older or less mobile residents, including sitting programs and slow walks. ¶
<p><u>B.4</u> Protect cultural and historic resources. ¶</p>	Fill out or update Massachusetts Historical Commission inventory forms for buildings and areas of historical importance in Rowe. ¶
	Encourage work with local Indigenous groups (e.g., the Nipmuc or Stockbridge-Munsee Community) on a cultural resource inventory or other related projects. ¶



Seven-Year Action Plan

<u>C.1</u> :-Develop a coordinated approach to implementing this Seven-Year Action Plan, ensuring that local proposals account for the plans of neighboring towns and community and regional partners.¤	Hire a staff person or establish a committee comprised of members of various boards to streamline and carry out the OSRP's Seven-Year Action Plan, the MVP and HMP plans, and the Climate Smart Stewardship Plan for Pelham Lake Park. This role would be focused on grant writing, managing the implementation of plans and project, and keeping Town committees on track with achieving the objectives, and other actions listed here under objective C.1.¤
	Align planning efforts with regional plans such as the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development, Deerfield River Corridor Outdoor Recreation Study , and the Watershed-Based Plan for the Deerfield River .¤
	Work with neighboring towns on regional conservation and recreation stewardship and special projects. Heath has an OSRP with which to coordinate efforts.¤
<u>C.2</u> :-Continue to engage boards and residents in discussions about community projects and in volunteering for the stewardship of the town's natural, recreational, and cultural resources.¤	Advocate that the Town be involved in the writing of a recreation plan for the publicly accessible Bear Swamp parcels.¤



Seven-Year Action Plan

<p><u>C.3</u> Improve public awareness and education level of boards, residents, and students regarding the protection and resilience of natural, recreational, and cultural resources. ¶</p>	<p>Create educational materials for display and/or distribution at Pelham Lake Park on the climate-smart stewardship forestry practices occurring and planned at the Park. ¶</p>
	<p>Share the final Rowe OSRP with the regional school district(s) so that students may have the opportunity to use the information in the Rowe OSRP in science and environmental curriculum. ¶</p>
	<p>Use community-friendly communication avenues, such as the Goal Post and public talks, to conduct educational outreach to private landowners about major conservation topics related to water, biodiversity, climate resilience, land protection, sustainable land management, funding sources, etc. The OSRP can be adapted in sections for educational purposes. Create a schedule for publishing to the Goal Post. ¶</p>
	<p>Use community communication avenues, such as the Goal Post, to promote recreation areas, trails, and programs and events to the general public. Use maps and describe parking, features, level of difficulty, and rules of uses when applicable. ¶</p>



<p><u>C.4</u> Continue to pursue funding opportunities for open space, recreation, climate resilience, and education. ¶</p>	<p>Continue to participate in and support the Woodlands Partnership of Northwestern Massachusetts for continued access to the financial and technical resources provided by the partnership. ¶</p>
	<p>Adopt the Community Preservation Act, which would allow the Town to raise funds through property taxes and matching state funds to use in local open space, historic preservation, community housing, and outdoor recreation projects. ¶</p>

DRAFT Priority Actions

- Land protection and management
 - Establish a procedure for exercising the Town's Right-of-First-Refusal to acquire private land coming out of Chapter 61
 - Improve management of Town-owned open space
 - Encourage Brookfield Renewables to permanently protect acreage
- Water and flood resilience
 - Hire a consultant to complete an assessment of all culverts and drainage systems in Town
 - Hire a registered professional engineer to complete a detailed hydraulic and hydrology study of the dams
- *Recreation?*
- Management
 - Hire a staff person or establish a committee to carry out work of OSRP, MVP, etc.
 - Use community-friendly communication avenues to conduct educational outreach to private landowners



© Ed Boudreau 2013

Next Steps

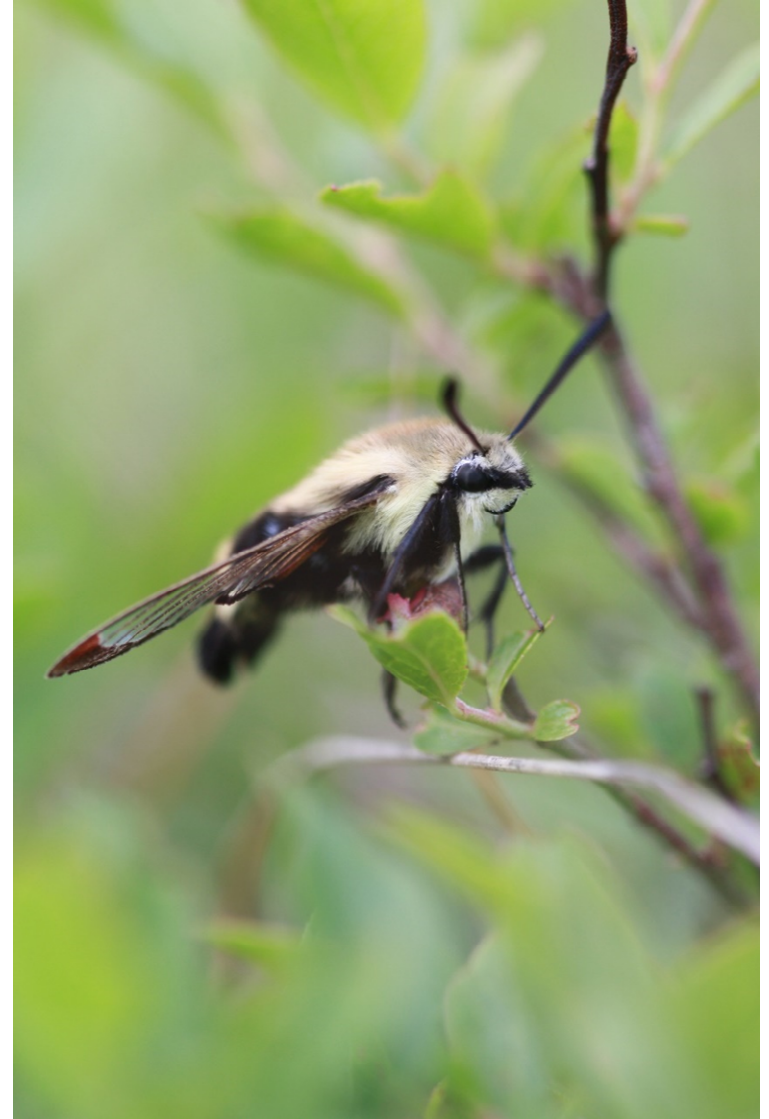
1. [Review the plan on the Town website](#)
send comments to tflanders@frcog.org by
Friday December 1st
2. Collect letters of support
3. Submit plan

After plan has been approved:

4. Have responsible committees identify
and discuss their actions
5. Form a group to work on project
prioritization and grant applications
6. Apply for grants identified in the OSRP
action plan table

QUESTIONS?

Clear-winged Hummingbird Moth
spotted on Negus Mountain
Chris Buelow



Discussion Topics

What are important open space or recreation actions the Town needs to take to achieve open space and recreation goals?

What is priority?